

**Agency: Commerce, Community and Economic Development****Grants to Named Recipients (AS 37.05.316)****Grant Recipient: Homer Soil and Water Conservation District****Federal Tax ID: 92-0161947****Project Title:**

## Homer Soil and Water Conservation District - Road Improvements to Caribou Hills Access Trail

**State Funding Requested: \$ 10,000**  
Future Funding May Be Requested**House District: 35 - R****Brief Project Description:**

The community is asking for \$10,000 to help with the cost of the \$15,000 survey required by DNR in order to grant a public easement for the Caribou Lake Trail.

**Funding Plan:****Total Cost of Project: \$210,000**

|       | <u>Funding Secured</u> |           | <u>Other Pending Requests</u> |           | <u>Anticipated Future Need</u> |           |
|-------|------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|-----------|
|       | <i>Amount</i>          | <i>FY</i> | <i>Amount</i>                 | <i>FY</i> | <i>Amount</i>                  | <i>FY</i> |
| Other | \$9,500                | FY2008    |                               |           |                                |           |
| Total | \$9,500                |           |                               |           |                                |           |

*Explanation of Other Funds:**There has been private donations to this project made through the Homer Snomads totaling \$5,500. Homer Soil and Water Conservation District had committed \$4,000 toward road upgrade.***Detailed Project Description and Justification:**

In the 1980s the State sold approximately 300 parcels of land to individuals in the area of Caribou Hills. The only proposed legal access to these remote parcels is off of Bassargin Road 20 miles east of Homer by a trail over wetlands. In the summer months people use ATVs to get to their property and in the winter snow machines. Due to excessive use in the summer, the wetlands were becoming very torn up resulting in soil and water degradation. A local snow machine organization approached the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District for assistance in addressing the environmental issues associated with this trail. Homer Soil and Water Conservation District applied and received funding to reroute the existing trail over higher ground and to install a raised board walk across the wetlands. Funding was obtained through a USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service's Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program and through Alaska Recreational Trails Grant. These grants required a 25% match, much of which was donated volunteer labor. The Homer Soil and Water District received a second State Recreational Grant to construct a parking lot at the trail head. .

The trail is completed, however due to a lack of funds, the as built survey required by DNR to issue a public easement on this trail has not been completed. Consequently there is not currently an easement on this trail making it difficult to pursue any additional funding to construct a road to the parking lot.

Land owners have organized to survey this access so that an easement can be granted by DNR and they can work on

improving the access road to the parking lot. The estimated cost of upgrading the road is \$210,000, of which many of the land owners and users have pledge a contribution of time or money. The community is asking for \$10,000 to help with the cost of the \$15,000 survey required by DNR in order to grant an easement.

**Project Timeline:**

Survey work is expected to be completed early summer.

**Entity Responsible for the Ongoing Operation and Maintenance of this Project:**

Homer Snowmads

**Grant Recipient Contact Information:**

Contact Name: Tara Schmit, Homer Soil & Water

Phone Number: 907-235-8177x5

Address: 4014 Lake St Ste 201

Email: info@homerswcd.org

Has this project been through a public review process at the local level and is it a community priority? ☐ Yes ☒ No



## Homer Soil and Water Conservation District

4014 LAKE STREET, HOMER, ALASKA 99603  
907-235-8177 ext 5

Notes from a public meeting concerning the Caribou Lake boardwalk trail  
and its parking lot, hosted by the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District,  
November 27, 2007, City of Homer Council Chamber

### Background to the following notes:

The road discussed at this meeting is the unfinished section of road to the new parking lot for the Caribou Lake trail (the trailhead parking lot). The road from Basargin Road to the blue shed parking lot has been upgraded and graveled by Bob Chew, the owner of the land on which the blue shed parking lot is located.

The consensus of those at the meeting was that it's a high priority to gravel the road to the trailhead parking lot. No one at the meeting expressed opposition to graveling the proposed section of road.

The other high priority action identified at the meeting was getting as-built surveys of both the new road and the Caribou Lake trail (the newly aligned route, 1/3 of which is now boardwalked) in order to get formal road and trail easements from DNR. Once state easements have been granted, raising funds for maintenance and improvements will be easier.

*\$10,000 is for this survey  
needed for the State to grant an  
easement*

### Follow-up actions

- A committee of the following individuals will work to (1) raise funds to get the needed as-built surveys and (2) develop a process for soliciting and organizing volunteers who can offer time and equipment for road work: Dave Mastolier, Micky Todd, Phil Needham, Jennifer McLay, Larry Boone, and Ray Bellamy. The Homer Soil and Water Conservation District will provide logistical and organizational support. The first meeting will be held Thursday, November 29, at noon in the District conference room (4014 Lake Street).
- Borough Assemblywoman Milli Martin will check on getting gravel from the borough.
- Mike Arno will begin compiling a list of volunteers who could haul gravel or run excavators or dozers. Any volunteer work has to be scheduled well in advance so as not to conflict with work commitments.

### Comments by the Homer Soil and Water Conservation District (HSWCD or "District")

- Devony Lehner, Al Poindexter, and Shirley Schollenberg provided background on the HSWCD in general and the Caribou Lake trail and trailhead parking lot in particular. The District works in partnership to accomplish natural resource goals. Damage to wetlands along the Caribou Lake trail, and related concerns by agencies, Caribou Lake landowners, and trail users led to District involvement on these issues. Most of the Caribou Lake trail is now boardwalked, but some rutted areas still exist and

February 5, 2008

Representative Paul Seaton  
State Capitol  
Mailstop 3100  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-1182

Dear Representative Seaton,

Re: public access to the Caribou Lake recreation sites

Early in the 1980's, The State of Alaska conducted two recreation parcel sales in the Caribou Lake area east of Homer. In the State Land Disposal Brochure, dated Spring 1982, the State guaranteed there would be access. Not built. But, guaranteed access. I quote from that document: ...."Legal access to the sites is available along existing Section Line right-of-way Easements. The present method of transportation into the area is along well defined seismic trails from the access road at Eagle Lake and across open swamps, utilizing ATV's or snow machines or by float plane access into Moose Horn or Caribou Lakes." I suspect the State anticipated that Caribou Lake would be used via float/ski planes, however, these popular recreation sites were purchased by folks who anticipated use of snow machines and ORV's, as stated in the brochure. (underline is my emphasis!)

These lots were purchased in good faith that access was guaranteed. However, by the year 2000 the damage from ORV's to the surrounding wetlands and fish habitat was very evident. Borough and local agencies and the user groups met with State officials to review the situation and see what they could do to mitigate that damage. At this point, I have to say, DNR has worked diligently with the local groups to resolve issues.

The recollection of several of those who attended one of these early meetings, at public questioning the representative from Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game, Habitat Division, threatened to close all access to protect the habitat in spite of original access promises. It is an issue that raises fears to this day.

The Homer Soil and Water Conservation group has taken a very active part over the years to secure funds through grants, provide their own funds where needed, as listed below, and organize thousands of dollars worth of volunteer work, to build a boardwalk utilizing the beetle killed spruce, on high-ground, in order to avoid the wetlands, and effect safe stream crossings. That has been done and the healing has begun.

But, now they find that to ensure that this access will be permanent, they have had to apply to the State DNR for a permanent access easement, an ADL (219905) along that

boardwalk, and a section of the access road to the partially constructed parking area, and pay for that survey, construction of that access and complete the parking area. Where is the State's responsibility, in light of the promise made at the time of sale of those lots? Surely, the state could assist these folks, to follow up on their promise? Especially in light of all the time and money many have already donated to that now safer access? And let us not forget, DNR is contemplating another sale in this area, which will further impact all access issues.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit with Mr. Mylius of DNR and his staff via teleconference. DNR has been on a fast track to accommodate the groups down here, however, he made it very clear he has no funds for the survey, and is lacking surveyors himself. (This has been very obvious to the Borough, as we endeavor to finalize our land selections. It takes forever to get survey instructions.)

After the special meeting in November, 2007, the Snomads Snowmachine Club, Inc. established a committee to work on the issue of the access to their recreation lots. This includes the survey and the access road, also, as noted above, promised by the state.

The survey cost estimates came in at about \$30,000 for the trail only. A local surveyor stepped forward and offered to complete the survey for \$10,000, provided the job is completed by March 2008 and does not interfere with his normal survey work. The committee is trying to raise funds from parcel owners at this time.

In addition is the issue of road access and parking. The Eagle Lake access described in the brochure, is off what is now Basargin Road, across a private agriculture parcel that since has been sold and the new owner has dedicated a right of way along the east portion of his land, to a site identified by DNR on state land for a parking pad. Access from the private parcel (the Chew Parcel) is along a ditched mud trail built by homesteader Bruce Willard, to access his remote homestead parcel to the west. For Mr. Willard this access is critical, as he needs to be able to work his hay fields for his cattle operation, and also access his hunting lodge. At this time, because of the increased traffic load, this trail is so deteriorated, he is not always able to access his lands. Although Mr. Chew has preliminary approval for the new section of road through his land, that plat has not been finalized or recorded to date. However he did go in and build a road from Basargin Road along the section line to the proposed new easement, and to the end of his property. That road is about 17 ft. wide with 4 turnouts. For the amount of traffic accessing the Caribou Lake area, this is totally unacceptable. It is therefore urgent to obtain funds somewhere to build that mile of road to Borough Road Standards, and complete the 10 acre lot as well. Once that is done, the Borough can maintain both the road and the parking lot, and together with the new boardwalk trail, provide proper access to the lots at Caribou.

Initially a parking pad was desired just onto DNR lands beyond the Chew parcel, however, when Cliff Larson of DNR came down to do the perk tests, he determined that would not an appropriate location, and instead has designated a 10 acre parcel 1 mile from Basargin Road, along the Willard trail to the new trail head. All of this is included

in the new survey, with the possible exception of a small piece from the Chew Property to the Willard trail. We recognize we need to work with the surveyor to be sure that is also included. Likewise, we need to ensure the total easement granted, be of no less than 60 ft. width to comply with Borough Road Standards.

The survey was started by an intern working for the SWCD, using some equipment from Kenton Bloom, a licensed surveyor. Unfortunately, that was not acceptable to DNR, and they are now requiring basically, a new survey.

Homer SWCD applied for two grants, receiving one in 2003 for construction of the trail, and the second in 2004 for the parking lot. However, those grants were very much inadequate to do a proper job, and has left that access road in such condition that as stated above, Mr. Willard has much difficulty to access his homestead area. Also, the grant did not provide sufficient gravel for more than 2 to 3 acres of the 10 acre parking pad. The Snomads Snowmachine Club, Inc has received bids in the amount of \$210,000, to gravel the road and complete the parking pad that would build the access road to a Class 3 road, so that the Borough will maintain it.

The Borough is not able to assist with construction, etc., because they lack Recreation Powers, and this is clearly recreation related. Likewise, the only Borough source of gravel in the area is currently under lease to a private individual.

I am enclosing considerable back up information. As I have reviewed all that has come down, from the time these parcels were put up for sale by the state, it is my view that the parcel owners have not been well served by the state. Granted, the Kenai Peninsula Borough lacks code to have forced DNR to provide buildable access, as is and has been done in the Mat-Su valley. But that is no excuse. There should have been far more review of all the area that is now being impacted, long before those lots were sold. And I go back to the beginning, where these folks were told to use the swamps, etc., for access. I do believe the State has an obligation to make this good. Likewise, having to locate that parking area so far down the road, should have been determined prior to the sale.

Therefore, in behalf of my constituents of Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly District 9, I am herewith requesting that the Snomads Snowmachine Club, Inc be reimbursed for the survey costs in the amount of \$10,000.

In addition I request consideration for \$210,000, to complete the access road and parking pad for the Caribou Lake access. I would like to note, there is precedence for this funding. Recently the State DOT built the trailhead at Clam Gulch and now maintains it. In this case, if built to borough standards, the borough will maintain it.

I am appealing to you to please review the history, and dedicate the funds to ensure protection of the habitat, and permanent access for these folks as they were initially promised at time of sale.

Very sincerely,



Milli Martin  
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907-235-6652  
Email: [millimom@xyz.net](mailto:millimom@xyz.net)

Cc: Governor Sarah Palin  
Mayor John Williams, Kenai Peninsula Borough  
Tom Irwin, Commissioner of DNR  
Dick Mylius, DNR, Div. of Mining Land and Water

Grants awarded to Homer SWCD to date:

USDA Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program contract for a total of  
\$151,000

Matching Grant from SWCD of 26%

For Trail work. Actual amount received from WHIP - 120,269.56

TRAAK grant, in 2003 for trail work \$30,000

TRAAK grant in 2004 for parking area work \$30,000

Both grants required a 40% match, from SWCD

encl: Copy of "Natural Currents", December 2007, January 2006 and November 2005  
Homer SWCD Notes of November 27, 2007 meeting  
Email from Jennifer McLay dated January 16, 2008  
Email from Tara Schmidt, dated January 16, 2008  
Snomads Snowmachine Club, Inc Letter of Sept. 15, 2002  
Kenai Peninsula Borough Trails Commission minutes of October 4, 2001 and  
November 1, 2001  
~~Recreational Trails Program 2003 Grant Application~~  
Maps

*If any questions, please call.*